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Impact of the economic crisis on human mobility in Japan : a preliminary note

*L'impact de la crise économique sur la mobilité humaine au Japon : note
préliminaire*

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Impact of the economic crisis on human mobility in Japan : a preliminary note

L'impact de la crise économique sur la mobilité humaine au Japon : note préliminaire

Yoshitaka Ishikawa

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- 1 Japan has faced recession and deflation since the collapse of the economic bubble in the early 1990s. In addition, its financial deficits have swollen immensely, giving it the largest financial deficits among all of the developed nations. Yet a viable solution to this problem has not been offered. On the one hand, expansion of disparities due to an increase in non-regular laborers continues, while on the other hand, the population continues to decrease, and anxiety about the social welfare, especially for the elderly, continues to rise. Moreover, the difficult situation that the Japanese economy finds itself in means that as the globalization of people, goods, and capital continues apace, Japan's position in international society is also diminishing. In this way, the "lost decade (*ushinawareta junen*)" of the 1990s (Yoshikawa, 2008; Miyoshi and Nakata, 2011) has in no time become 15 years, and with the global economic crisis triggered by the Lehmann Brothers shock of 2008, as well as the negative trends in Japan since the 1990s, we can now speak of a "lost 20 years (*ushinawareta nijunen*)" in regards to the Japanese economy (Sakurai *et al.*, 2011).
- 2 Such economic changes have exerted great influences on various forms of human mobility in Japan. Regarding the business cycle, it is well known, for example, that the economic boom from the latter half of the 1980s to the early 1990s led to a rise in Japan's position in the world, and the country became a significant destination of international

migration (Castle and Miller, 1998, pp. 141-161). Conversely, the decline of land prices caused by recession started to stimulate significant in-migration to the central part of the Tokyo metropolitan area in the mid-1990s (Esaki, 2011). What has been the full impact of the economic crisis on human mobility in Japan? Was it similar to, or different from, the impact of the recession in the 1990s? These questions remain unanswered.

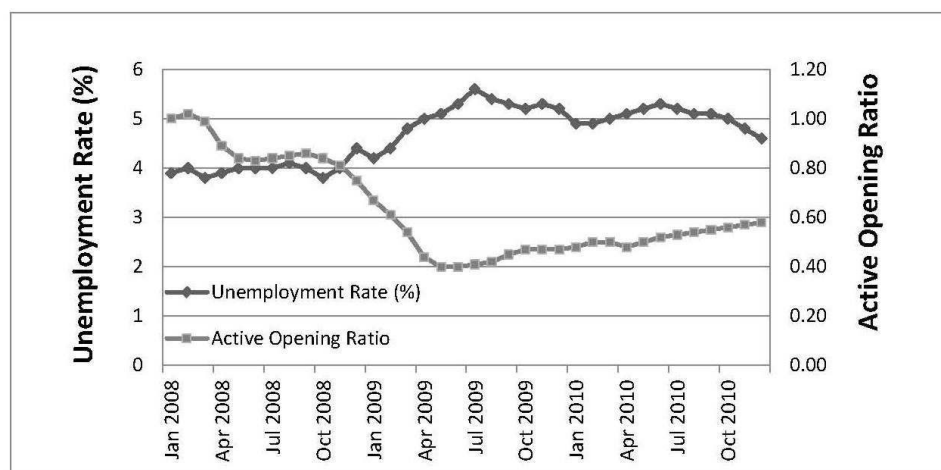
- 3 Regarding international migration to Japan, the labor force shortage during the bubble-economy period caused a massive influx of foreigners. This influx continued even in the recessionary period of the 1990s, leading to an increase in the foreign population (Ishikawa, 2003). However, the negative impact of the current economic crisis has been so serious that it has revealed a reduction in foreign residents since 2009. Such an influence was acute in the manufacturing stronghold of the Nagoya metropolitan area and its vicinities, where manufacturing is a key industry. In response to the economic crisis, the Japanese government employed a migration policy to support migrant workers (OECD, 2010, p. 216). Has this policy obtained satisfactory results?
- 4 Since many previous studies have focused on the influence of economic crises on human mobility in Japan (for example, Nobukuni, 1983; Hama, 1995; Ishikawa and Fielding, 1998; Ishikawa, 2001; Yano *et al.*, 2000; Yano *et al.*, 2003), the topic has attracted a certain amount of attention in the existing literature. However, the following two drawbacks need to be mentioned. First, the economic crises investigated in the literature were chiefly the recession observed in the late 1970s or the 1990s, but the recent impact of the global economic crisis on human mobility has not been adequately explored in Japan. Second, the subjects addressed in previous research were usually internal migration by Japanese nationals as the ethnic majority. However, the fact that Japan has witnessed a rise in its foreign population over the past few decades suggests that we must pay attention to the human mobility both of Japanese nationals and foreigners.
- 5 Furthermore, we also have to consider the following two factors to fully explore the impact of the crisis on human mobility in the country. First, because actual human mobility can be observed in different forms and various mobility categories are often interrelated (e.g. Wright *et al.*, 1997; Williams and Hall, 2000; Skeldon, 2006; Ishikawa and Liaw, 2009), it is important to take up different categories of human mobility and examine the interrelations among them. Second, there has been a remarkable upsurge of interest in foreign workforces in the country (e.g. Kuwahara, 2001; Kajita *et al.*, 2005), but careful study on the influence of the economic crisis on spatial mobility of migrant workers in Japan remains scarce. However, recent sociological investigations include interesting works with an emphasis on mass unemployment of the workers from South America and their salient features as non-regular laborers (Higuchi, 2010; Inaba and Higuchi, 2010; Takenoshita, 2011). Since this issue constitutes a main research topic in the existing literature on the impact of the global economic crisis (e.g. Domínguez Mujica *et al.*, 2009; Castles and Vezzoli, 2009; Abella and Ducanes, 2009; Fix *et al.*, 2009; OECD, 2009, 2010; Khatiwada, 2009; Castles and Miller, 2010; Fielding, 2010), the Japanese experience must also be elucidated.
- 6 The central aim of this paper is to explore the impact of the current economic crisis on various categories of human mobility including migration and tourism. The main data sources used here are public statistics and newspaper articles published in Japan. The structure of the paper is as follows. First, a few measures of economic fluctuation, mainly since January 2008, are introduced. Then we examine the internal migration of Japanese nationals as an ethnic majority and the entry of foreigners and the departure of Japanese

as international human flows. Next, we explore the programs of national and local governments that support migrant workers as a link between economic change and human mobility. Finally, our obtained findings are summarized.

Economic background

- 7 To begin with, we examine the background of the economic environment that changed the spatial flows of human mobility. Specifically, the three monthly measures that show business cycles concerned with both labor and real estate markets since 2008 are chosen.
- 8 First, Figure 1 shows the unemployment rate from the Labor Force Survey by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. The rate remained stable around 4.0% until November 2008, but it continued to increase until July 2009, suggesting a substantial economic crisis. The figure reveals a declining tendency until January 2010, and then up-and-down movement between 4.6% and 5.3%.
- 9 Second, the data of the active opening ratio are also shown (Fig. 1), which were obtained from Employment Referrals for General Workers published by the Employment Security Bureau, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. Original data were collected at public job security offices in Japan and defined as the number of active job openings divided by the number of active job seekers. A value of one means that supply and demand in the labor market are completely balanced. During economic boom periods, this measure tends to greatly exceed one, suggesting that more people can easily get jobs. During economic recessions, however, it tends to fall below one, showing the difficulty for job-seekers to get jobs. As well as the unemployment rate, this indicator is frequently used to know the supply-demand imbalance of the country's labor market. According to Figure 1, the ratio is stable between 0.83 and 0.86 from May to October 2008, but began to decline sharply in November 2008. But after its nadir (0.40) in May and June 2009, it exhibited a gradual increase, suggesting a slight recovery of Japan's labor market.

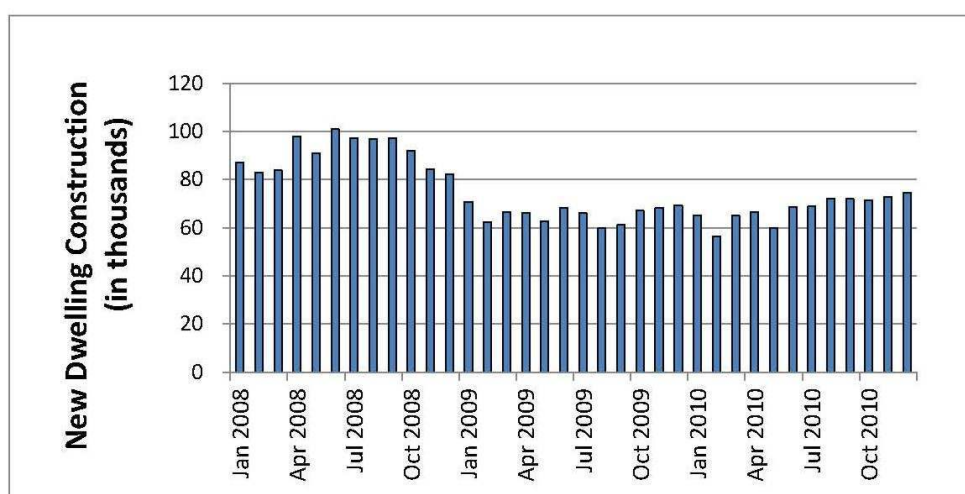
Figure 1. Unemployment Rate and Active Opening ratio (2008-2010).



SOURCE: STATISTICAL SURVEY DEPARTMENT, STATISTICS BUREAU, MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS, LABOR FORCE SURVEY, AND EMPLOYMENT SECURITY BUREAU, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, LABOUR AND WELFARE: EMPLOYMENT REFERRALS FOR GENERAL WORKERS

- 10 Third, we look into the trend of new housing construction, whose data were derived from the New Dwelling Construction Survey by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (Fig. 2). This measure was 97,000 in September 2008 and began to decrease in October 2008 and sunk to a trough of 62,000 in February 2009. It has recently exhibited a slight fluctuation between 59,000 and 72,000.
- 11 The above three economic background-related measures reveal that Japan had obviously fallen into an economic crisis in the fall of 2008. The active job openings-to-applicants rate reveals a slight and gradual increase since the summer of 2009 (Fig. 1), and new housing construction in the six months since April 2010 increased 6.2% more than in the same period of a year ago, probably reflecting the Japanese government's policy of reducing interest rates for house loans (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2010c). However, Japan's economy has not completely recovered. On July 6, 2010, the Japanese Government claimed that March 2009 was the trough of this economic fluctuation; however, we believe that the country still hasn't escaped this economic crisis because none of these three measures have shown figures resembling those observed in the pre-crisis months.

Figure 2. New Housing Construction (2008-2010).



SOURCE: POLICY BUREAU, MINISTRY OF LAND, INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT AND TOURISM, NEW DWELLING CONSTRUCTION SURVEY

Human mobility

- 12 In this section, we examine the impact of the economic crisis and concentrate on various flow categories of human mobility. Unfortunately, mainly due to the unavailability of data, our examination is restricted to two categories: internal migration by Japanese nationals and international human flows by Japanese and foreign populations.

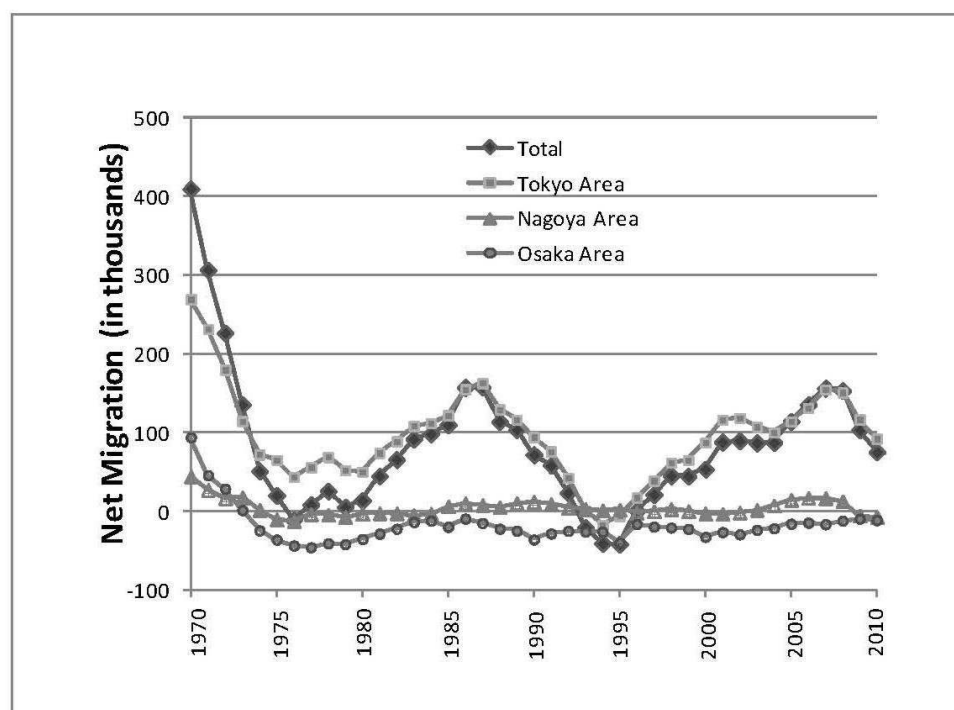
Internal migration by Japanese nationals

- 13 The internal migration trend is based on the Report on Internal Migration in Japan Derived from Basic Resident Registers by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Note that these statistics only cover Japanese nationals as an ethnic majority. Fig. 3 shows the annual net migration since 1970 of the three largest

metropolitan areas of Tokyo (the prefectures of Saitama, Chiba, Tokyo, and Kanagawa), Nagoya (Gifu, Aichi, and Mie), and Osaka (Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, and Nara), which is a good summary indicator of inter-prefectural migration in Japan (see Fig. 4 for Japan's three largest metropolitan areas and prefectures).

- 14 Although the limits of these areas obviously contain non-metropolitan districts, the above definitions based on prefectural boundaries have often been employed to examine the socioeconomic trends such as internal migration in Japan. We chose such a long, 40-year period because the influence of business cycles on this mobility category for a long period has often been investigated in the literature.
- 15 The reduction of net migration in the late 1970s for the three areas (Fig. 3) can be attributed to the economic recession associated with the two oil shocks as well as to such related factors as the exhaustion of the out-migration potential from the peripheral regions and the dispersal of employment opportunities, particularly in the manufacturing sector, to such regions in search of lower wages and other costs (Ishikawa, 2001). However, the bubble economy since the mid-1980s revived the ability of metropolitan areas to attract population, particularly in the case of Tokyo, which leaped to the status of a global city as an influential international financial center. Nevertheless, the rising land prices in the Tokyo area explain the somewhat sharp decline of its attractive force since 1988 (Fig. 3). The decrease of net migration observed in the first half of the 1990s can also be explained by a recession that started at the beginning of the decade, resulting in the deterioration of labor market conditions. However, since this recession caused land prices to plummet, it enabled massive condominium construction particularly in central part of Tokyo Special Wards, which in turn formed the background of in-migration to the part (*jinko toshin kaiki* – literally population return to such parts) since the mid-1990s.

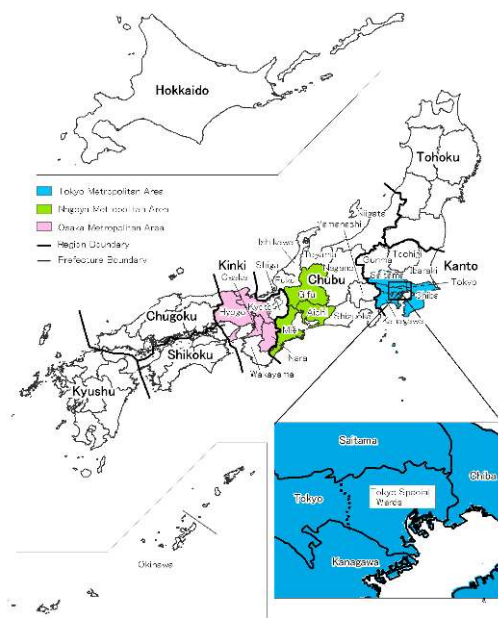
Figure 3. Net migration of Three Largest Metropolitan Areas (1970-2010).



SOURCE: STATISTICS BUREAU, MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS: ANNUAL REPORT ON THE INTERNAL MIGRATION IN JAPAN DERIVED FROM THE BASIC RESIDENT REGISTERS

- 16 Regarding very recent years, the net migration of the three areas as a whole shows a sudden reduction: +154,000 persons (2008) --> +104,000 (2009) --> +76,000 (2010). A considerable amount of these changes is due to the net migration reduction recorded in the Tokyo area, Japan's largest metropolitan area, whose economic situation deteriorated. Significantly, this substantial reduction of net migration was greatly correlated to the declining trend observed in the overall population of the Tokyo area: +152,000 (2008) --> +117,000 (2009) --> +92,000 (2010). This trend appeared because in the peripheral prefectures, high school graduates tended to find jobs or enter colleges/universities close to their hometowns, and intra-company staff transfers to Tokyo offices seemed to decrease in response to the business downturn in the Tokyo area (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2010a). The changes observed in this area can be well understood by the rather rapid decline in net in-migration to the Special Wards. In other words, *jinko toshin kaiki* has been greatly weakened by the economic crisis in recent years, although related factors remain unclear at this stage (Esaki, 2011).
- 17 Even the Nagoya area, which is a well-known manufacturing stronghold, reveals a reversal from a net in-migration of +14,000 persons (2008) to net out-migration of -5,000 (2009) and -6,000 persons (2010). A primary cause is the stagnation of the car industry in response to reduced demand. The net out-migration from the Osaka area was reduced from -11,000 persons (2008) to -9,000 (2009), which reflected a fall in inter-metropolitan migration from the Osaka area to the Tokyo area, but the figure in 2010 slightly rebounded to -10,000 persons. Hence, we can safely note that the economic crisis obviously impacted internal migration, mainly due to the contraction of employment opportunities especially in two of the three major metropolitan areas. While such a slowdown of net migration into the metropolitan areas may negatively impact the country's economic growth as a whole, it can be considered a preferable halt of depopulation in the peripheral regions because of the reduced out-migration of young people towards the metropolitan areas.
- 18 The above discussion reflects the plight of Japanese nationals as an ethnic majority. In contrast, a massive influx of foreigners to Japan began in the late 1980s, and the 1990s were characterized by recession. Can we similarly confirm the negative impact on internal migration for foreign residents as an ethnic minority? That is a very interesting research question. Unfortunately, how seriously the 1990s recession and the current economic crisis affected internal migration by the foreign population remains unknown, mainly owing to the unavailability of comprehensive time-series data about internal migration by foreign residents.

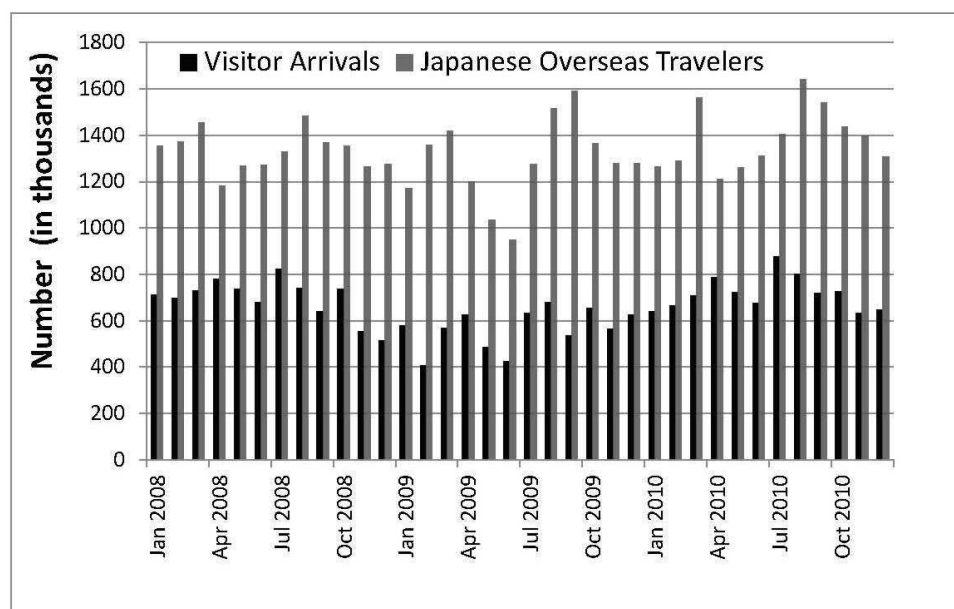
Figure 4. Three Largest Metropolitan Areas and Prefectures of Japan.



International tourist flows of foreigners

- 19 Next, we examine the population flows and focus on the recent changes in the monthly fluctuation of visitor arrivals and Japanese overseas travelers since January 2008, based on data from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO). These data substantially correspond to international tourist flows. Like the sectors of construction, manufacturing and financial services, tourism is considered to be more vulnerable to the economic crisis (Fielding, 2010).
- 20 Now let us look at the trends in tourism flows, including the years leading up to the crisis. The total annual numbers of Japanese overseas travelers, in millions, were 17.4 (2005) --> 17.5 (2006) --> 17.3 (2007) --> 16.0 (2008) --> 15.4 (2009) --> 16.6 (2010); on the other hand, the figures for overseas visitor arrivals, in millions, were 6.7 (2005) --> 7.3 (2006) --> 8.3 (2007) --> 8.4 (2008) --> 6.8 (2009) --> 8.6 (2010) (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2010, p. 40, p. 85; Japan National Tourism Organization, 2012). Accordingly, the worst change rate was -7.6% for the former and -18.7% for the latter during the period 2008-2009.
- 21 According to Figure 5, monthly fluctuation is notable, and obvious seasonal peaks can be observed. With respect to Japanese overseas travelers, March and August/September have attracted more travelers mainly due to holidays at the end of the academic year and summer holidays, respectively. Meanwhile, regarding visitor arrivals, more people are likely to visit the country in August and September. To appropriately confirm the negative impact of the economic crisis, we need to keep in mind that the observed monthly fluctuation shown in the figure is linked to these tendencies.

Figure 5. Visitor Arrivals and Japanese Overseas Travelers (2008-2010).



SOURCE: JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION (JNTO)

- 22 As for Japanese overseas travelers shown in the Figure 5, there is a swell in August 2008 and a subsequent decline, leading to a trough in January 2009. After a short increase in February and March 2009, the number rapidly dropped to a low in June 2009 (948,000 persons). We conjecture that this was caused by the economic crisis. A sudden recovery is revealed from the next month and the number fluctuates between 1.26 and 1.65 million, numbers that approach or exceed those observed in the first half of the 2008. The situation of visitor arrivals is slightly different. It began to decline in November 2008 and reached troughs in February (409,000) and June (424,000) of 2009. Then the numbers revealed an increase. Given the declines in the two line graphs shown in Figure 5, we have to mention that these two flows of human mobility without residential changes have obviously been affected by the economic crisis. It is quite likely that the decline in the tourist influx was also due to the yen's remarkable appreciation since 2007 and the transmission and spread of influenza A (H1N1) in 2009 (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2010, pp. 30-31).
- 23 Noteworthy in this context is the Visit Japan Campaign, launched in 2003 by JNTO, newly established within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism to promote overseas tourism to Japan. By comparison, we can assume that such detailed data on international tourism cannot be obtained for the 1990s. A long-standing great discrepancy between the departure of Japanese tourists and the entry of overseas tourists provides an important background to this project. For example, if the data of human flows during the past decade based on the "Annual Report of Statistics on Legal Migrants" by Ministry of Justice are employed, the departures of Japanese nationals and the entries of foreigners in 2002 were 16.5 million and 5.8 million, respectively; in 2010, the former was 16.6 million and the latter was 9.4 million. Therefore, despite a slight reduction of the difference during this period, a remarkable net out-flow of Japanese nationals still exists. The campaign's goal was 10 million visitors in 2010 based on a steady increase in the entry of foreigners. However, the visitor arrivals only reached 8.6 million

in 2010 (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2012), significantly short of the goal. The impact of the economic crisis on visitor entries to Japan was so serious that it negated the positive effect of the Visit Japan Campaign.

- 24 Furthermore, it is interesting to investigate regional differentiation of this human mobility at the prefectural level. Such work is based on the results of the in-depth sample survey conducted by JNTO. Regarding the share by destination of foreign tourists, the regions including the three largest metropolitan areas and their vicinities, often called the “golden route”, are popular. The top five prefectures in terms of foreign tourist attraction during the period 2006–2010 remained the same; in 2010, for instance, this distribution was Tokyo (58.8%), Osaka (24.4%), Kyoto (20.6%), Kanagawa (16.7%) and Chiba (12.7%). In this respect, the crisis has not produced great regional differences in its impact. An exception seems to be the decrease observed in Kyushu in 2008–2009 owing to the rapid tourist decline, especially from South Korea (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2011, pp. 9–10).
- 25 Nonetheless, the human mobility of tourist flows focused on Japan has recovered in the very recent past. The number of Japanese overseas travelers has continued to increase over the past year on a month-on-month basis during the five successive months since October 2010, mainly due to the strong yen effect and expansion of international flights at Narita Airport. Furthermore, the number of visitor arrivals has also continued to increase over the past year during the *sixteen* successive months since November 2009, due to recovery from the economic crisis in countries of origin and the effect of JNTO’s publicity efforts, among other factors. This suggests that international human mobility – without the effect of residential change – has recovered from the negative impact of the crisis since fall 2010. The main contributor to this trend is the sharp increase in the Korean and Chinese influx to Japan since then (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2012). With regard to the impact on tourism, Montanari (2010), for example, concluded that tourism to Rome has not been markedly affected by the crisis. Recovery of tourist flows to Japan was later than in the case of Rome, but recent movement toward restoration of the pre-crisis level has certainly been confirmed.
- 26 Foreign visitors to Japan can also be examined from the spatial breakdown by continents and major Asian countries based on JNTO data. Examination here concerns the 2008–09 change, which is considered to be most severely affected by the crisis. With respect to the composition of visitors in 2009 by continent of origin, more than 70.9% came from Asia, followed by North America (12.9%) and Europe (11.8%); if we concentrate on the rate of change in 2008–09, Asia also shows the highest rate of decrease (–21.8%), followed by Africa (–15.8%), South America (–13.2%) and Oceania (–11.7%). Next we show visitors to Japan in 2009 and the rate of change in 2008–09 by Asian countries because of their larger shares (Table 1). Hong Kong denotes persons of Chinese nationality with Hong Kong Special Administrative Region passports. In terms of the number of visitors in 2009, South Korea, Taiwan, and China were the three countries sending the largest numbers of visitors, but these countries have also been adversely affected by the economic crisis (Wang, 2010; Chan, 2010; Fielding, 2010).

Table 1. Visitor Arrivals by Countries of Origin (2008-2009).

Country	Immigrants in 2009 (in unit of 1,000)				Change Rate 2008-09 (%)			
	total	tourists	business	others	total	tourists	business	others
South Korea	1,587	1,154	292	141	-33,4	-39,0	-16,1	-0,7
Taiwan	1,024	913	80	31	-26,3	-27,8	-16,1	2,9
China	1,006	482	182	342	0,6	5,7	-12,8	1,9
Hong Kong	450	418	27	4	-18,3	-18,5	-18,0	7,9
Thailand	178	136	25	17	-7,5	-5,3	-21,7	1,2
Singapore	145	121	21	3	-13,5	-11,5	-23,8	-11,9
Malaysia	90	60	20	9	-15,3	-14,2	-24,9	6,3
Philippines	71	38	13	21	-13,0	-10,4	-26,7	-7,2
Indonesia	64	41	10	12	-4,5	2,4	-17,0	-13,7
India	59	20	22	17	-12,5	-9,5	-18,4	-7,4
Vietnam	34	10	7	17	-1,6	6,4	-3,9	-5,0
Israel	12	7	4	1	-7,3	-3,3	-10,7	-24,5
Others	95	43	19	32	-6,5	-10,6	-15,4	6,8

SOURCE: JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION (JNTO)

- 27 Based on a breakdown of the recorded numbers into three purpose-oriented categories (tourism, business, and others), the decrease in the tourism category is more pronounced than that of business from South Korea and Taiwan. Note that “others” in Table 1 includes study, training and diplomacy/official service. South Korea was the largest tourist-sending country, but tourism from the country has been hindered by the yen’s appreciation against the Korean won and the economic crisis. To partially make up for this, in 2008 JNTO attempted to attract more tourists from Hong Kong with a project called the “Hong Kong-Japan Tourism Exchange Year 2009” (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2009a). But visitors from Hong Kong including tourists declined by -18.3% in 2008-09 (Table 1).
- 28 Meanwhile, regarding China, the number of businesspersons decreased as well, but tourists increased (+5.7%), even in this recessionary period, implying a greater interest of Chinese people in sightseeing and reflecting the country’s recent rapid economic growth. Chinese visitors exceeded one million in 2008 and 2009. Their presence is quite welcome in Japan, because it can help erase the slack in tourism growth, mainly reflecting Japan’s national population decline. Moreover, the Japanese government began issuing visas for individual tourists from China from July 2009, and the conditions for issuing such visas were loosened in July 2010 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011). A salient feature of Chinese tourists is that they tend to spend more money than other tourists (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2010c).

Migrant workers in Japan

- 29 Next we investigate how the economic crisis has affected migrant workers as a link between economic changes and human mobility, because immigrants are generally more vulnerable during an economic crisis (OECD, 2009, p. 13).

Identifying migrant workers

- 30 First, in order to identify migrant workers, the latest changes in registered foreigners are examined. According to the Statistics on Foreigners Registered in Japan from the

Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice, their numbers have changed over recent years: 2,217,426 (2008) --> 2,186,121 (2009) --> 2,134,151 (2010), with the most conspicuous decrease rate in 2008–09. These figures deserve attention because this number consistently increased from 1962 to 2008, including the recessionary decade of the 1990s (Ishikawa, 2003). In other words, since fall 2008, the economic crisis has been so serious that a drop in registered foreigners would seem inevitable.

- 31 Regarding the rate of change for 2008–09 by prefecture, although a slight increase was confirmed in the four prefectures included in the Tokyo metropolitan area, a notable decrease over -5.0% was found in Gunma, Toyama, Nagano, Gifu, Shizuoka, Aichi, Mie, and Shiga prefectures. These eight prefectures are located in central Honshu, and thus, seemingly, they may be less exposed to international economic events than the three large metropolitan areas (in particular, the Tokyo area). However, these prefectures form a manufacturing stronghold (especially for the production of automobiles and electric appliances) that is greatly supported by foreign workers, whose job opportunities and housing have been arranged carefully through intermediary agencies. This is why they have not worked in other parts of the country. The total population of registered foreigners in these prefectures in 2009 amounted to 535,911 (24.5% of all registered foreigners in Japan). Therefore, in Japan the manufacturing sector seems to have been more vulnerable to the crisis, which is consistent with the view of Martin (2009).
- 32 To confirm which nationality was hit more acutely by the economic crisis, Table 2 reveals the populations of the ten largest nationalities in 2009 and their rates of change from 2008–09. The decreases in the nationalities of Brazil (-14.4%), Indonesia (-6.3%), and Peru (-3.8%) are remarkable. However, the populations of the two South American nationalities are much larger than Indonesia, and therefore, we stress that Brazilians and Peruvians have been affected by the economic crisis more severely. The above prefectures that showed a relatively large rate of decrease correspond with the concentration areas of the Brazilian and, to a lesser extent, the Peruvian population.

Table 2. Number of Registered Foreigners by Country (2008-2009).

Nationality	Number (2008)	Number (2009)	Change rate 2008-09 (%)
China	655.377	680.518	3,8
South Korea	589.239	578.495	-1,8
Brazil	312.582	267.456	-14,4
Philippines	210.617	211.716	0,5
Peru	59.723	57.464	-3,8
United States	52.683	52.149	-1,0
Thailand	42.609	42.686	0,2
Vietnam	41.136	41.000	-0,3
Indonesia	27.250	25.546	-6,3
India	22.335	22.858	2,3
Others	203.875	206.233	1,2
Total	2.217.426	2.186.121	-1,4

SOURCE: THE IMMIGRATION BUREAU, MINISTRY OF JUSTICE: STATISTICS ON FOREIGNERS REGISTERED IN JAPAN

- 33 Their primary status-of-residence is very similar: permanent residents (43.5% of Brazilians and 55.2% of Peruvians in 2009) and long-term residents (37.9% of Brazilians and 29.1% of Peruvians). Most foreigners of these two nationalities are descendants of Japanese immigrants who arrived in South America between the beginning of the twentieth century and the early 1960s, and they are allowed to work freely in Japan. To emphasize this aspect, the word *nikkei* (of Japanese descent) has often been used. A certain part of the Brazilian and Peruvian populations have thus far changed their status from long-term to permanent residents after several unproblematic years in Japan. They have been greatly involved in the manufacturing sector located in the central part of Japan, especially Shizuoka, Aichi, Gifu, and Mie prefectures, where most of members of the Conference of Cities with Foreigner Concentration (*gaikokujin shuju toshi kaigi*) are found.
- 34 In summary, Brazilian and Peruvian populations working in the manufacturing industry with long-term residence status can be regarded as a major segment of migrant workers in contemporary Japan. The findings obtained from this sub-section about migrant workers fit well previous studies (for example, Kajita *et al.*, 2005; Ishikawa and Liaw, 2009). *Nikkei* Brazilians and Peruvians have been more severely harmed by the current economic crisis. The unemployment rate reported in the prefectures with a large concentration of *nikkei* Brazilians exceeded 40%, clearly showing the great hardships they suffered (Higuchi, 2010). Their vulnerability as non-regular workers in Japan's labor market and the difficulty they face in climbing the socioeconomic ladder were mercilessly extenuated by the crisis (Takenoshita, 2011).

- 35 However, unlike the assumptions of Castles and Vezzoli (2009), higher unemployment and worker layoffs have not generated a notable resentment among workers of Japanese nationality, mainly because the foreign labor force forms a rather segmented market; moreover, there seems to have been no serious competition between the two groups for the jobs hit by reductions.

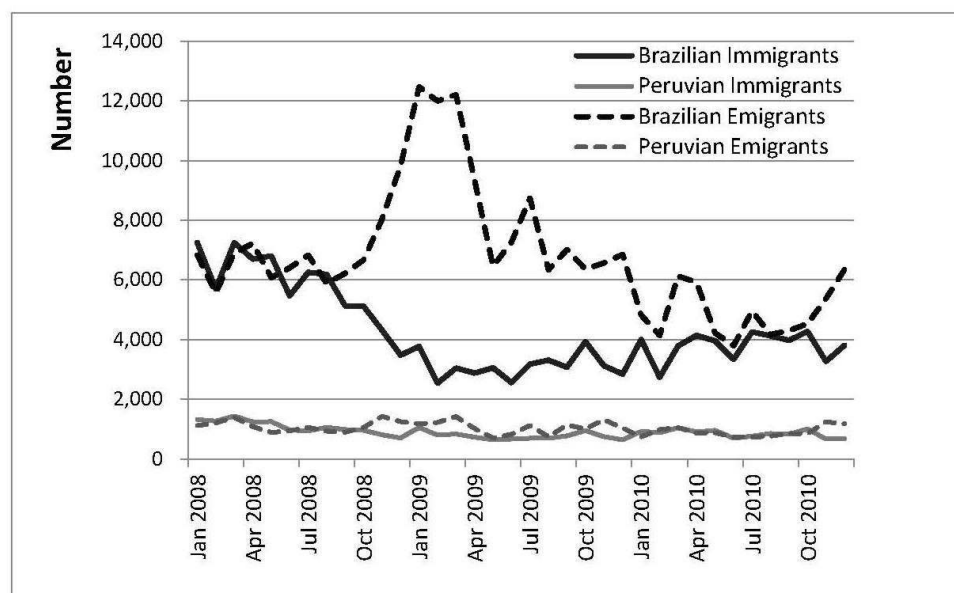
Support programs for migrant workers

- 36 Noteworthy in this context are the decisions by the Japanese Government and Gifu Prefecture to develop two programs to support migrant *nikkei* workers of Brazilian and Peruvian origin: providing financial incentives to return to their home countries and training programs for re-employment. This subsection explores how much these programs have actually helped to mitigate the difficulties of these migrant workers.
- 37 The first program, which started on 1st April, 2009 and expired on 31st March, 2010, gave an allowance for unemployed workers of Japanese descent wishing to return to their home countries. Applicants got 300,000 Japanese yen (JPY) (US\$ 3,700 in terms of currency values as of November 2010), and dependent relatives got 200,000 JPY (US \$ 2,460). Those qualified to receive unemployment insurance for more than 30 and 60 days received an extra 100,000 and 200,000 JPY, respectively. However, at the beginning, the regulations stipulated that applicants cannot re-enter Japan with the same status-of-residence visa (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009a).
- 38 Applicants totaled 21,675 persons, and their major nationalities are Brazil (92.5%) and Peru (4.2%). The two largest prefectures where this program was utilized are Aichi (26.8%) and Shizuoka (21.4%) (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2010a). The location of the primary prefectures corresponded well to the areas of concentrations of Brazilian residents, as mentioned above.
- 39 A similar support policy was formulated by Gifu prefecture in cooperation with Tokai Rodo Bank. This plan provided loans for airplane tickets to jobless *nikkei* Brazilians to return home; the program was initially funded with about 100 million JPY. The regulations provide that if the beneficiaries cannot repay their loan, the prefecture will make up the deficit. This is probably the first attempt by a prefecture to financially support jobless migrant workers in Japan. According to the prefecture, about 700 persons were eligible for financing (Chunichi Shimbun, 2009). The first term of this program started in March 2009, and applications for the second term began in September 2009. During the first term 55 families (130 persons) applied and 33 families (77 persons) returned between March 29 to April 27, 2009 under this program.
- 40 The second ministry program offered three-month training for those seeking re-employment. Courses included Japanese conversation in the workplace, a review of basic labor laws and employment practices, and résumé preparation and interview simulations. This program was launched in April 2009 in areas with high concentrations of foreigners and was expected to expand to other areas (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2009b).
- 41 Evaluations and reactions to these two programs were mixed. Concerning the first program that gave travel allowances, some praised it as a humanitarian measure. Re-entry restrictions to Japan for such foreign workers were supported as a special project

for the *nikkei* workforce, financially supported by national taxes. However, others sharply criticized the measures.

- 42 First, since the ministry's announcement did not specify the period for which the foreign workers had to stay in their home country after leaving Japan, opponents claimed that this program basically strips them of their privileged position of *nikkei* Brazilian and Peruvian and resembles repatriation. After receiving such sharp criticism, T. Kawamura, Chief Cabinet Secretary, explained in May 2009 that the period in which foreign workers cannot reenter Japan is about three years. This announcement weakened opposition to this program. Generally, among *nikkei* Brazilians, opinion on this return program was embarrassment rather than welcome or approval, because many have already gained a foothold in life in Japan and the economic situation in Brazil is difficult (Yomiuri Shimbun, 2009; Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2009b).
- 43 Second, the numbers of applicants were fewer than expected, because employment prospects for migrant workers in Brazil or Peru seemed bleak and their re-entry to Japan would be very difficult (for example, Asahi Shimbun, 2009; Tokyo Shimbun, 2009). Moreover, this program began in April 2009, but it might have been too late, because most jobless Brazilian or Peruvian workers had seemingly already left Japan before March 2009. According to Figure 6, which shows monthly entries to and departures from Japan by Brazilians and Peruvians since January 2008, Brazilian entries decreased from September 2008 to February 2009. Brazilian departures began to increase in September 2008 and peaked in January, February, and March 2009, but Peruvian foreigners exhibited less conspicuous fluctuation. It suggests that this government program lagged behind their actual return to Brazil and Peru. It seems that much more *nikkei* migrant workers returned to Brazil at their own expense than those who returned by receiving this ministry allowance (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2010b).

Figure 6. Entries and Departures of Brazilian and Peruvian Population (2008-2010).



SOURCE: JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENT, MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT, MINISTRY OF JUSTICE: ANNUAL REPORT OF STATISTICS ON LEGAL MIGRANTS

- 44 In addition to these two criticisms, OECD (2009, p. 63) mentioned that past programs, which sought to blunt the effect of economic crises by providing incentives for migrants to return voluntarily, have not been very successful (also see Fix *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, historical experience shows that if opportunities for legal labor migration remain limited during the recovery phase, an increase in irregular migration may occur in response to labor shortages in some occupations. This should also be investigated in the context of Japan.
- 45 With respect to the training program provided by the ministry, in fiscal year 2009 (April 2009 through March 2010), the program was offered in 63 municipalities of 14 prefectures, and 344 courses were conducted for 6,298 persons (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2010b). The direct effects of this program may be limited in the short term, because it was launched after the economic crisis took place. At any rate, it can be praised for its comprehensive attitude toward the reception and support of foreign workers from a long-term perspective (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2009c). Although strong macroeconomic shocks may jeopardize the medium- and long-term integration of immigrants (OECD, 2009, p. 63), the ministry's training programs might bolster such integration.
- 46 Nonetheless, there were still criticisms of the program. First, the entire training time per person (181 hours) was considered too short for achieving the original aims when compared with, for instance, the 510 hours implemented in the Netherlands; second, the number of available opportunities was too small to accommodate the overall number of jobless workers who demand such a program (Higuchi, 2010). Furthermore, Inaba and Higuchi (2010, p. 99) clarified that the ministry's budget for the travel allowance program was about five times higher than that for the training program, although the latter is much more important than the former from a long-term viewpoint on the Japanese government's policy. In fact, they argued that the crisis could be a very good opportunity for the government to reverse its conservative policy on foreign workers.

Concluding remarks

- 47 This paper explored the impact of the current economic crisis on various categories of human mobility including the internal migration of Japanese nationals and international human flows of foreigners. We reached the following three conclusions.
- 48 First, the influence of the economic crisis since the fall of 2008 has been far-reaching on Japan, since it influenced various mobility categories, regardless of ethnic majority or minorities. Although the country has shown a gradual recovery from the crisis, it has not extricated itself completely. Second, the intensity of the negative impact varies, for example, by metropolitan areas and nationalities. Badly affected population groups include the Japanese nationals in the Tokyo metropolitan area and migrant workers, particularly Brazilians, in the Nagoya metropolitan area and central Japan manufacturing prefectures, although regional differences associated with the influence of the crisis were not discussed in any detail. Third, support programs by the Japanese government were extended to migrant workers from the spring of 2009. Although the number of foreign residents began to increase in the late 1980s during Japan's economic boom and continued to increase even in the recessionary decade of the 1990s, this was the first opportunity for the government to provide support programs. Such programs, however,

proved to be problematic. In particular, the program that provided incentives for migrants to voluntarily return to their home countries was introduced too late.

- 49 A most conspicuous difference between the 1990s recession and the current economic crisis is the acute impact of the latter on migrant workers from South America, including their returns to home countries. With respect to the interrelations among different mobility categories, there seems to have been no serious competition for reduced jobs between Japanese workers and migrant workers. Moreover, since the acutely affected areas vary by mobility category (namely, the Tokyo area in internal migration, the Nagoya area and its vicinities in employment of migrant workers, and Kyushu in international tourism), it seems somewhat difficult for us to elucidate the interrelatedness of the findings obtained here and, further, to demonstrate the validity of such a perspective convincingly.
- 50 This paper chiefly discussed the current situation or the short-term aspects concerning the negative impact of the economic crisis. However, it is too early to clearly elucidate its full impact, because the latest available data confirm that current labor market situation has not shed the crisis yet. We need to continue this topic and explore it from both medium- and long-term perspectives, whose importance is demonstrated in OECD (2009, pp. 13-14, pp. 63-65). Finally, we must mention that the new changes due to the terrible earthquake/tsunami damage and the tragic nuclear crisis of March 11, 2011, have overridden the post-economic-crisis circumstances of human mobility, which had been showing a slow recovery (Ishikawa, 2011). For these reasons, it is extremely difficult for us to have a clear perspective on the near future, but gaining such a perspective is no doubt a very important though challenging task.

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ABSTRACTS

The central aim of this paper is to explore the impact of the global economic crisis on different categories of human mobility, including migration and tourism, in Japan. The major findings can be summarized as follows. First, since the fall of 2008 the crisis has had a far-reaching influence on Japan, for both the ethnic majority and minorities. Second, the intensity of the negative impact has varied by metropolitan areas and nationalities. Japanese nationals in the Tokyo metropolitan area and migrant workers (particularly Brazilians) in the Nagoya metropolitan area and central Japan manufacturing prefectures are the most affected population groups. Finally, support programs by the Japanese government were problematic, and, in particular, the program that provided incentives for migrant workers to voluntarily return to their home countries was introduced too late. However, it is too early to clearly elucidate the full impact of the crisis, since the latest available data confirm that the current situation remains in a state of crisis.

L'article vise à explorer l'impact de la crise économique mondiale sur différentes catégories de mobilité humaine au Japon, y compris les migrations et le tourisme. Les résultats principaux de l'étude peuvent se résumer comme suit. En premier lieu, depuis l'automne 2008, la crise a eu une influence non négligeable sur le pays, à la fois pour la majorité et pour les minorités ethniques. Ensuite, l'intensité de l'impact négatif a varié selon les zones métropolitaines et les nationalités. Les nationaux de la zone métropolitaine de Tokyo, ainsi que les travailleurs migrants (surtout des Brésiliens) de la zone de Nagoya et des préfectures manufacturières du centre sont les groupes les plus touchés. Enfin, les programmes d'aide mis en place par le gouvernement japonais se sont révélés problématiques, en particulier celui qui offrait des incitations au retour volontaire vers les pays d'origine, qui a été introduit trop tardivement. Cependant, il est trop tôt pour appréhender pleinement le réel impact de la crise, car les dernières données disponibles confirment que la situation actuelle demeure une situation de crise.

INDEX

Mots-clés: crise économique, migrations internes, travailleurs migrants, Japon

Keywords: economic crisis, internal migration, tourist flows, migrant workers, Japan

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